## In the Claims

***Please amend the claims to read as follows:***

1) (Currently Amended) A multi-layered opaque, laminate construction able to be thermally imaged ~~comprising~~ consisting essentially of:

   a) a support material having a first surface and second surface, wherein the support material may be either paper or polymer and wherein the support material is opaque and non-cavitated and the first surface of the support material is coated with a metal oxide having a first surface;

   b) an active direct thermal layer, having a first and second surface, overlying said first surface of the metal oxide layer, said active direct thermal layer having a chromogenic material for a color developing mechanism reactive to transmissions of heat through either the first or second surface of the active direct thermal layer for forming images within the active direct thermal layer.

2) (Original) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 1 wherein the first surface of the active direct thermal layer is covered with a direct thermal top coat layer.

3) (Original) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 1 wherein the metal oxide is a non-stoichiometric aluminum oxide.

4) (Original) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 1 wherein the polymer support layer may be either a polyolefin, polyester or blends thereof.

5) (Original) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 4 wherein the support layer is the non-cavitated polyester selected from the group consisting of polycarbonate, polyethylene terephthalate (PET) and blends thereof.

6) (Original) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 1 wherein the image formed is readable in the near-infrared.

7) (Original) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 1 wherein the laminate further comprises a radiation-curable topcoat applied to the top layer of the laminate.

8) (Original) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 1 wherein the laminate further comprises a primer layer that is applied to the first surface of the active direct thermal layer.

9) (Currently amended) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 1 wherein the laminate further comprises one or more color coating layers applied to:

    a) a first surface of a binder layer, wherein said binder layer is applied to the first surface of the direct thermal layer; or

    b) the first surface of the active direct thermal layer.

10) (Original) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 1 wherein the laminate further comprises a chemically-resistant pressure-sensitive adhesive applied to the second surface of the support material.

11) (Original) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 10 wherein a silicone-coated release liner is laminated to the second surface of the pressure-sensitive adhesive.

12) (Currently amended) A thermally imaged, opaque, multi-layered, laminated durable label which ~~comprises~~ consists essentially of the following sequence of layers:

a) a UV-cured chemical-resistant barrier topcoat generally covering the entire first surface as the top layer of the laminated label;

b) a color coating layer which is applied in full or partial pattern coverage;

c) a primer layer;

d) an active direct thermal layer with a direct thermal topcoat, said active direct thermal layer having a chromogenic material for a color developing mechanism reactive to transmissions of heat through either the first or second surface of the active direct thermal layer for forming images within the active direct thermal layer;

e) a support material comprising ~~a~~ an opaque polyester base layer, having a first and second surface, wherein ~~coated~~ the first surface of the polyester base layer is coated with a non-stoichiometric aluminum oxide layer;

f) a chemical resistant adhesive; and

g) a polyester release liner with a silicone coating.

13) (Original) The thermally imaged, multi-layered, laminated durable label of claim 12, wherein said label is for use in pathology, hematology, and general laboratory uses.

14) (Original) The thermally imaged, multi-layered, laminated durable label of claim 13 wherein said UV-cured chemical-resistant barrier topcoat may be applied by flexography, offset, screen-printing or other similar techniques.

15) Cancelled

16) Cancelled

17) Cancelled

18) (Currently amended) A multi-layered opaque, laminate construction able to be thermally imaged ~~comprising~~ consisting essentially of:

a) a support material having a first surface and second surface, wherein the support material may be either paper or polymer and wherein the support material is opaque and non-cavitated and the first surface of the support material is coated with a non-stoichiometric aluminum oxide layer, having a first and second surface;

b) an active direct thermal layer, having a first and second surface, overlying said first surface of the aluminum oxide layer, said active direct thermal layer having a chromogenic material for a color developing mechanism reactive to transmissions of heat through either the first or second surface of the active direct thermal layer for forming images within the active direct thermal layer; and

c) a direct thermal top coat layer which covers the first surface of the ~~aluminum oxide~~ active direct thermal layer.

19) (Original) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 18 wherein the polymer support layer is a non-cavitated polyester selected from the group consisting of polycarbonate, polyethylene terephthalate (PET) and blends thereof.

20) (Original) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 19 wherein the laminate further comprises a primer layer that is applied to the first surface of the active direct thermal layer and a radiation-curable topcoat applied to the top layer of the laminate.

21) (Original) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 20 wherein the image formed is readable in the near-infrared.

22) (Currently Amended) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 21 wherein the laminate further comprises one or more color coating layers applied to ~~a binder layer or~~ the first surface of the active direct thermal layer.

23) (Original) The multi-layered laminate construction of claim 22 wherein the laminate further comprises a chemically-resistant pressure-sensitive adhesive applied

to the second surface of the support material and wherein a silicone-coated release liner is laminated to the second surface of the pressure-sensitive adhesive.